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| Notice of Allowability | Application N . | Applicant(s) |
| | 09/955,301 Examiner | LEE ET AL. Art Unit |
| | Christopher E. Lee | 2112 |

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address--

All claims being allowable, PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS (OR REMAINS) CLOSED in this application. If not included herewith (or previously mailed), a Notice of Allowance (PTO-85) or other appropriate communication will be mailed in due course. **THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWABILITY IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS.** This application is subject to withdrawal from issue at the initiative of the Office or upon petition by the applicant. See 37 CFR 1.313 and MPEP 1308.

1. This communication is responsive to the RCE filed on 17th of December 2004.
2. The allowed claim(s) is/are 1-3,5-13,15 and 16.
3. The drawings filed on 19 September 2001 are accepted by the Examiner.
4. Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 - a) All b) Some* c) None of the:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

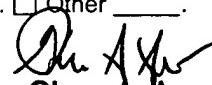
* Certified copies not received: _____.

Applicant has THREE MONTHS FROM THE "MAILING DATE" of this communication to file a reply complying with the requirements noted below. Failure to timely comply will result in ABANDONMENT of this application.
THIS THREE-MONTH PERIOD IS NOT EXTENDABLE.

5. A SUBSTITUTE OATH OR DECLARATION must be submitted. Note the attached EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT or NOTICE OF INFORMAL PATENT APPLICATION (PTO-152) which gives reason(s) why the oath or declaration is deficient.
6. CORRECTED DRAWINGS (as "replacement sheets") must be submitted.
 - (a) including changes required by the Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) attached
 - 1) hereto or 2) to Paper No./Mail Date _____.
 - (b) including changes required by the attached Examiner's Amendment / Comment or in the Office action of Paper No./Mail Date _____.
- Identifying indicia such as the application number (see 37 CFR 1.84(c)) should be written on the drawings in the front (not the back) of each sheet. Replacement sheet(s) should be labeled as such in the header according to 37 CFR 1.121(d).
7. DEPOSIT OF and/or INFORMATION about the deposit of BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL must be submitted. Note the attached Examiner's comment regarding REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEPOSIT OF BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL.

Attachment(s)

1. Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2. Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3. Information Disclosure Statements (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08),
Paper No./Mail Date _____
4. Examiner's Comment Regarding Requirement for Deposit
of Biological Material
5. Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6. Interview Summary (PTO-413),
Paper No./Mail Date 20041228.
7. Examiner's Amendment/Comment
8. Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance
9. Other _____.


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Glenn A. Auve
Primary Patent Examiner
Technology Center 2100

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

1. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Mr. Robert E. Bushnell (Reg. No. 27,774) on 28th of December 2004.

The application has been amended as follows:

IN THE CLAIM

As to claim 8, in line 1, substitute "(Currently Amended)" by --(Previously Presented)--.

2. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

Applicant's claimed invention in the claim 1 is deemed allowable over the prior art of record as the prior art fails to teach or suggest that the common port of said each switching device is connected to the second port of said given function-extending module, and said n-l selection ports of said each switching device are connected to the first port of n-l function-extending modules, respectively.

The claims 2, 3, 5 and 6 are dependent claims of the claim 1.

Applicant's claimed invention in the claim 7 is deemed allowable, respectively, over the prior art of record as the prior art fails to teach or suggest that connecting the common port of each switching device to a first port of a respective one of said function-extending modules; and connecting each selection port of said each switching device to a second port of a corresponding one of said function-extending modules other than said respective one of said function-extending modules.

The claims 8-11 are dependent claims of the claim 7.

Applicant's claimed invention in the claims 12 and 16 is deemed allowable, respectively, over the prior art of record as the prior art fails to teach or suggest that connecting the second port of the previously installed function-extending module to a first port of a newly installed function-extending

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module via a common port of a first switching unit and a selection port of a second switching unit when only one previously installed function-extending module is present.

The claims 13 and 15 are dependent claims of the claim 12.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Christopher E. Lee whose telephone number is 571-272-3637. The examiner can normally be reached on 9:30am - 5:30pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Mark H. Rinehart can be reached on 571-272-3632. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Christopher E. Lee
Examiner
Art Unit 2112

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